

**Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force**  
**meeting minutes**  
**Wednesday, October 3, 2007; Lexington, Nebraska**

1. Call to order – Chairman Charles Brooks called the meeting to order. Roll call was taken. Task force members present: Kent Aden, Mike Clements, Jim Miller, Greg Ibach, Charles Brooks, Mike Linder, Russ Shultz, Ann Bleed, Mike Arps, John Erickson, Rich Tesar, Scott Josiah, Mike Sarchet, Gloria Erickson, Senator Deb Fischer, Senator Don Preister, Senator Cap Dierks, and Senator Tom Carlson. Task force members absent were Tom Thompson and Senator John Harms. Three task force members sent alternates: Dan Duncan for Dr. Gary Cunningham; Milt Moravek for Ron Bishop; and Frank Albrecht for Kirk Nelson. Guests present included: Jason Alexander, Bob Bettger, John Thorburn, Merle Illian, Alison Krohn, and NDA staff members Rich Reiman, Mitch Coffin, and Bobbie Kriz-Wickham.
2. Task force members discussed whether the meetings should be tape recorded and transcribed. Senator Preister opened the discussion and expressed his desire to make available to the public, and have on file, a full and accurate record of the meetings. He said education of the public on riparian vegetation management is an important function of the task force.

Ibach said NDA solicited quotes for transcription and was told it would cost about \$1,000 per meeting; NDA also was told by members of the Unicameral staff that they do not provide transcription services for state agencies.

Task Force members continued discussion. One member questioned whether members of the public would read a transcription. Another said he was concerned that having meetings transcribed would hamper open discussion, and he suggested the minutes could be revised if the task force feels they are inadequate.

Ibach made a motion to do an informal recording of each meeting, to retain the tapes from the recording, and to not transcribe the meeting. Senator Dierks seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: In support of the motion: Aden, Clements, Miller, Ibach, Brooks, Linder, Shultz, Bleed, Arps, John Erickson, Tesar, Josiah, Sarchet, Gloria Erickson, Senator Fischer, Senator Preister, Senator Carlson and Senator Dierks. Voting against the motion: none.

3. Reiman reviewed the Opening Meetings Act.
4. Brooks opened discussion on the review of the July 26, 2007, meeting minutes. Senator Preister said he was concerned that the minutes did not reflect the following four points: 1) The minutes did not include his comments about wanting the meetings to be recorded in a manner that was complete and accurate; 2) the minutes did not include the opening comments made by Senator Carlson; 3) the minutes did not include statements by Kirk Nelson about his surprise and concern that the grant program was already moving forward; and 4) the minutes did not include his concerns about the \$2 million in grant money being allocated ahead of the task force's first meeting. He said he felt the minutes needed to be amended.

Bleed made a motion to approve the minutes with Senator Preister's suggested amendments. Sarchet seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: In support of the motion: Aden, Clements, Miller, Ibach, Brooks, Linder, Shultz, Bleed, Arps, John Erickson, Tesar, Josiah, Sarchet, Gloria Erickson, Senator Fischer, Senator Preister, Senator Carlson and Senator Dierks. Voting against the motion: none.

5. Under Old Business, Brooks opened a discussion about development of goals and objectives for the task force. Ibach said at the first meeting, the task force had a handout on this subject that was rather broad. He referred to a new handout, and noted it was an attempt to tighten up goals and objectives language from the first draft.

The task force discussed and debated specific terminology used in the proposed document and suggested several wording changes, which were added to the document.

Senator Carlson said he strongly favors including in the goals and objectives an emphasis on removing vegetation in the streambed, a point which is lacking in the draft document. Task force members also expressed concern about draft language that indicated removed vegetation would be replaced, because replacing vegetation will not be appropriate in all cases.

It also was pointed out that there could be numerous interpretations of the word “invasive” as it is used to describe vegetation, so terms needed to be carefully selected. “Non-native” was suggested as an alternative.

Brooks suggested that a work group consider the suggestions and further develop the goals and objectives document for the full task force to consider at a later time.

Ibach summarized the discussion and language changes and offered to share the revised document with the work group.

Shultz made a motion to forward the suggested changes to the existing goals and objectives document to the work group for development, and that the document be returned to the full task force for discussion at a later meeting.

Roll call vote: In support of the motion: Aden, Clements, Miller, Ibach, Brooks, Linder, Shultz, Bleed, Arps, John Erickson, Tesar, Josiah, Sarchet, Gloria Erickson, Senator Fischer, Senator Preister, Senator Carlson and Senator Dierks. Voting against the motion: none.

6. Under New Business, the task force:
  - a. Viewed the video on the Nine Mile Creek vegetation management project. Sarchet fielded questions.
  - b. Discussed the designation of phragmites as a noxious weed in the Republican River basin. Mitch Coffin said the designation gives weed management officials some legal authority to treat phragmites if a landowner was not cooperative. He said individuals have asked why the designation has not been made for the Platte River, where the problem is widespread, and he noted such designation would saddle landowners there with large treatment costs without the financial support available to help them.

- c. Discussed proposed task force work groups. The task force went through each proposed work group and asked for volunteers. The task force discussed the functions of some of the groups and was reminded that work groups would be advisory to the task force, with the task force making all major final decisions. There was significant discussion on the streambed ownership work group, regarding existing law, potential for statutory changes and whether this matter is relevant to task force business. Josiah said the discussion on this subject leads to the issue of definitions of terms like “riparian” and “streambed” and “channel.” Brooks noted that such a task – the development of a glossary of terms – could be assigned to the goals and objectives work group. It was decided that each work group should be chaired by a task force member. Chairs include: Goals, Objectives and Reports, Senator Carlson; Vegetation Management and Treatment, Aden; Survey and Monitoring, Tesar; Education and Awareness, Clements; Funding and Incentives, Arps; Streambed Ownership, Shultz; and Vegetation Water Use, Bleed and Alexander.
  - d. Discussed the impending report to the Governor and the Legislature. Task force members discussed including in the report an explanation of how the task force has structured itself and an update on its efforts to date. The group also wanted the report to include an update on the grant program, with emphasis on results from the current work, including any measurements showing the effects of the work. Ibach said NDA would develop a general outline of the December report with areas for the work groups to input their activities. Shultz said the challenge is for the work groups to meet and have something to report at the November task force meeting.
7. The task force received an update from LB 701 Riparian Vegetation Management Grant Program grant recipients.
- a. Aden reported on the Lake McConaughy project. He said 2,011 acres of salt cedar had been treated and the cost to date was about \$360,000. Two years from now they will go in and remove the dead salt cedar trees. They used a name brand product that had a guarantee of 90 percent root control after three years.
  - b. Merle Illian reported on the Eastern Republican Improvement Project. Almost all landowners along the project area have committed support to the project. Two contracts for treatment have been let, for both air and ground treatment, and treatment is being conducted from Harlan County Dam east to Guide Rock at present. Grounds crews follow up behind the helicopter to do spot treatment. He said they will have to go back in next year to do additional followup. He said phase 2 of the project will be mechanical work involving the removal of log jams.
  - c. Coffin reported on the Western Republican Improvement Project. He said the group is just getting started on treatment, with their focus on salt cedar and phragmites.
  - d. Sarchet reported on the High Plains Invasive Species project. He said they are focused on two things this fall: education and getting some control test plots in place. He distributed copies of a newsletter that was recently published by the High Plains Weed Management Association in conjunction with the Panhandle Research Integration for Discovery Education. He said each county in the Weed Management Association is responsible for mapping infestations in their county. He said \$20,000 of their grant is marked for in-stream treatment activities, and two islands are marked for treatment. Sarchet said the chemical and mechanical work is necessary for the initial knock-down of infestations, but that biological and grazing may be good tools for maintenance activities.

8. Under Other Items, the task force:
  - a. Was told that a Legislative hearing on riparian vegetation management, LR 106, was scheduled for October 30 in Alma.
  - b. Discussed the best method of communication for the task force and the work groups. All agreed that email was an acceptable form of communication and that information should also be posted on the website.
  - c. Opened the floor for discussion. Tesar said he brought an example of a phragmites rhizome that grew 26 feet in 24 days. Shultz distributed a handout on the Lower Platte Weed Management Area and its efforts on riparian infestations. He said he wanted to show that control efforts are just scratching the surface, and that it is very critical that Nebraska move ahead with treatment opportunities.
  - d. Scheduled the next meeting for November 14 in Grand Island at the Central Platte NRD, with the start time moved back due to an 8 a.m. meeting in Lincoln that many folks need to attend.
9. Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m. for departure to the Platte River for a vegetation tour.